

BROADCAST IN INDIA

By Michael S. Kinnear

The history of the *Broadcast* label and its proprietors in Great Britain has been related by Frank Andrews in *Hillandale News*, Number 129 (December 1982), pages 126-131, and number 130 (February 1983), pages 148-150, under the title of "Broadcast - The Story of a Record." An aspect of the *Broadcast* record label's output not mentioned in those articles concerns the production of an Indian repertoire on the label for the Indian and Asian market. Although manufactured in England between 1934 and 1937, these Indian recordings were produced and distributed by a separate and independent company formed late in 1933, called The Musical Products Ltd., whose headquarters were at Madras, in South India.

Some years before The Musical Products Ltd was established in late 1933, the English repertoire of the Broadcast record label was placed on the market in India by the Indian branch of the British publishing company, MacMillan and Company Limited., whose head office in India was at Delhi, with branches at Bombay, Calcutta and Madras.

The Broadcast record label was imported into India from July 1928 by MacMillan and Company Limited's Calcutta branch, through an agency agreement with the Vocalion (Foreign) Limited, until early 1932, when that company was wound up by the Vocalion Gramophone Company Ltd. This in turn was acquired by the Crystalate Gramophone Record Manufacturing Company, Limited in March 1932, who continued the agency arrangement with MacMillan & Co., Ltd., for India.

The Madras branch office of MacMillan & Co., Ltd., at 6, Patullo Road, Madras, under the management of H. C. Stagg, resumed the distribution in India of the English repertoires of Broadcast, Eclipse, Imperial and Rex records for the Crystalate Gramophone Record Manufacturing Company Limited, from about the middle of 1932.

In about December 1933, The Musical Products Ltd., Madras was established by Jesinglal Kisharlal Mehta and Kirtilal Manilal Mehta as partners, with an Authorized Capital of 50,000 rupees, at 167 Mount Road, Madras. It seems that the capital was not to be paid into the company until mid-1934, at which time the company may be deemed to have commenced its operations officially.

Jesinglal and Kirtilal Mehta were members of a very prominent family of diamond merchants, and partners in the family business that had been established in 1895, by their forebears, in the name of Surajmal Lalubhai & Company. Over the past three decades the business had grown into one of the foremost diamond and precious stone merchants in India, with its head office in Bombay, a branch in Madras and an office in Antwerp, Belgium. The firm was among the world's leading suppliers of industrial diamonds, including of course diamond tips for cutting heads and lathes as used in the recording industry,

which might explain how they came to be involved in such an apparently unrelated field, while Jesinglal Kisharlal Mehta himself was known as a patron of Indian Classical music.



Between 1932 and 1934 several small Indian recording companies had sprung up including Hindusthan Musical Products & Varieties Syndicate, Ltd; The Megaphone Company; and the Senola Musical Products Company, all of Calcutta; The Ruby Record Company, Bombay and Saraswathi Stores, Madras, to name the most important, along with a couple of dozen smaller regional concerns who all had their own labels, and whose products were usually both recorded and manufactured by The Gramophone Company, Limited, at their Dum Dum factory, under a scheme known as "Private Recorders," which attempted to keep all record manufacture in India under the one company's umbrella. Those that were not prepared to join the Gramophone Company, Ltd.'s scheme of providing pressings of records had to find alternative means of having their recordings manufactured. The only other disc record factory then operating in India was the Viel-o-phone Company, Limited. The plant was owned and operated by Valabhdas Runchordas of Bombay, who had been manufacturing records there since 1914. By the early 1930s, however the plant was somewhat antiquated and only capable of producing pressings of rather poor quality.

The Musical Products Ltd., Madras, was established as producers and distributors of gramophone records through an agency agreement with Meloto Company, Ltd., who were responsible for the export side of the Crystalate Gramophone Record Manufacturing Co., Ltd. A Mr. Binstead has been referred to as the person sent out to India to supervise the sessions for Broadcast there.

The company's head office was at 167 Mount Road, Madras, with a branch office in Bombay and recording rooms in Bombay, Calcutta and Colombo, Ceylon. Other distributors had sole rights for Broadcast records in India outside of Madras, Bombay, Calcutta and Colombo.

In accordance with the locations of the three recording studios, the matrix series for the Indian Broadcasts had the prefixes 'HO' (Madras), 'BHO' (Bombay) and 'CHO' (Calcutta) with a numerical system beginning at 1. Some 12" matrices were indicated by the conversion of the letter O to T, so that the three matrices would become 'HT', 'BHT' and 'CHT'. There may also have been some other similar codes as yet undiscovered.

Four numerical blocks were utilized by the company for Indian Broadcasts - 2000, 2500, 3000 and 4000, with the retail prices for each of these blocks being indicated by a complicated and confusing set of prefix letters that described the colours of the labels, and thus their price category. (These categories were revised in 1936, and were somewhat simplified in much the same way as the Gramophone Co. in England had rationalised their previously complicated system of label colours - and prices - a little over a decade earlier).

The table below shows these categories, along with their relevant prices. It will be seen that like the English Broadcast company The Musical Products Ltd. manufactured quite a variety of different sizes:

8" GE Gold Rs. 1-12-0
 8" RE Red Rs. 1-8-0
 8" BE Blue Rs. 1-4-0
 9" RN Red Rs. 2-0-0
 9" BN Blue Rs. 1-8-0
 10" G Gold Rs. 4-0-0
 10" R Red Rs. 3-8-0
 10" B Blue Rs. 2-4-0
 10" Y Yellow Rs. 1-12-0
 10" Baby - 1934 Rs. 1-4-0
 10" GR Gold, red stamp Rs. 3-0-0
 10" BG Blue, green " Rs. 2-8-0
 10" RG Red, green " Rs. 2-12-0
 10" GB Green, blue " Rs. 2-4-0
 10" O Orange Rs. 1-12-0

12" GT Gold Rs. 4-8-0
 12" RT Red Rs. 4-8-0
 12" BT Blue Rs. 3-8-0

○ *Revised in 1936 to :*

Yellow label 10" Rs. 2-4-0
 Blue Label 10" Rs. 2-12-0
 Red label 10" Rs. 2-8-0
 Red label 12" Rs. 5-0-0

The Musical Products Ltd. quickly assembled a very impressive list of recording artists, including several renowned classical vocalists and instrumentalists who had already achieved a certain amount of fame as 'Gramophone' artists, through their earlier efforts on His Masters Voice. Among these was Pearsa Sahib, who had made cylinder and disc recordings as far back as 1904. Recordings of this artist appear on just about every label with an Indian repertoire that one can find up to the 1930s, but by the time he sang for Broadcast, his high-pitched voice was but a shadow of its former glory.

Some of the other artists signed up for the Broadcast label can be seen in the advertisement reproduced below, which dates from December 1934. They included Miss Keserbai Kerkar, Miss Siddheswari Devi, Miss Jaddan Bai, Miss Krishnabai, Master Krishna, Ustad Bundu Khan, Subbulahmania Pillai. (Some were making their very first recordings – all were later to achieve great fame and fortune with the Gramophone Co. (India) Ltd.) The very wealthy parent company was able to offer large fees for Broadcast recordings, without which many of these artists would not have been captured.

हिंदी नुकतेच प्रसिद्ध झाले आहेत



रेकॉर्ड्स

खाली दिलेल्या सुविख्यात कलाकारांनी आपल्या गापनाची कमाल केली आहे !

उर्दू
हिंदी
गुजराती
आणि
मराठी
बाराही भाषेत

प्रो. शरीफखान (प्रादेश)	मिस् कुम्भापाई
मास्टर वनत अमृत	मिस् कमलेश्वरी
मास्टर मेरी रत्ना	मिस् सुगन
मास्टर कृष्णा	मिस् अन्नवतीजान
मि. शरामसिंग	मिस् नलिनाबाई
मास्टर दामोदर पुरोहित	मिस् मुलायमशर्मा
मास्टर गीतवादा	समगणी दुर्गाबाई

आजपर्यंत ज्या रेकॉर्ड्स ऐकण्याची आपण वाट पाहत होता. तेच हे रेकॉर्ड्स आहेत इतर रेकॉर्डम्पेक्षा आमचे रेकॉर्ड्स दीडपट वेळ वाजत राहतात

—कॅटलॉगमाती मिळा—

धी म्युझिकल प्रोडक्ट्स लिमिटेड

१९ रामपार्ट रो, मुंबई

१९७, माउंट रोड, मद्रास

Additionally, the company tried very hard to persuade Khan Sahib Abdul Karim Khan, one of India's most famous vocalists, to make recordings with them, but he stubbornly refused, remaining loyal to Odeon even though he had not recorded since 1905. Had The Musical Products Ltd. succeeded in signing Khan Sahib Abdul Karim Khan it would have been the equivalent in India of a rival to The Gramophone & Typewriter in Milan signing Enrico Caruso!

Between 1934 and 1936 The Musical Products Ltd. made considerable inroads into what had previously been almost exclusively The Gramophone Co. (India)'s preserve. In common with one other firm however they were still having their discs manufactured abroad – the only other Indian recording company in this position was T. S. Ramchunder & Bros., whose Ramagraph records were being manufactured by Carl Lindstrom A. G., in Berlin.

In 1934 Duleria A. Pandya established The National Gramophone Record Manufacturing Co., Ltd., with a disc record factory in Bombay. Apart from its own 'Young India' label, this company also offered custom pressing services; a dramatic increase in the number of new record labels not surprisingly followed soon thereafter – by early 1937 there were around one hundred different labels, of which all but Broadcast and Ramagraph were being made by either The Gramophone Co. at its Dum Dum factory or the new National Gramophone Record Manufacturing Co. in Bombay.

During 1936 the Authorised Capital of The Musical Products Ltd. was increased to 100,000 rupees. Jesinglal Mehta, as Managing Director, had also become proficient enough to make his own recordings for the company, which were given their own matrix code of 'JM.' Although a vast amount of money had been put into the recording and distribution of Broadcast in India – the company's matrix stocks totalled by then some 2000 titles – sales were, on the whole, dismal. Surajmal Lalubhai & Co., the parent company, finally decided there was no point in throwing good money after bad, especially in view of the burgeoning competition and took steps to wind down The Musical Products Ltd.

Although the Head Office of the company had remained, officially, at Madras, Jesinglal Mehta was more or less permanently stationed at Bombay, where the Broadcast records were achieving their highest sales and so, from late 1936 the distribution of Broadcast records in South India was passed to General Products Co. of Madras, who also represented several other minor labels. To compound The Musical Products Ltd.'s problems still further, in March 1937 the Decca Gramophone Co., Ltd. took over the goodwill, plant and other assets of the Crystalate Manufacturing Company, Ltd. who had been providing the Broadcast pressings. The last known catalogue of Indian Broadcast releases is for February 1937, even though titles continued to be released and advertised up to mid-1937.

By July 1937 Jesinglal Mehta had severed his connection with The Musical Products Ltd. and set up a separate record company under the name of The Diamond Record Company, in Bombay. He proceeded to introduce the 'Lotus' label, whose pressings were manufactured by The National Gramophone Record Manufacturing Co., Ltd., also of Bombay. The design of the Lotus label bears a striking resemblance to the Broadcast label, except that the "diamond" in the centre of the upper half of

the circle was replaced by a lotus flower and the legend "British Make by Patent Process" which had appeared on the Broadcast label had been rather amusingly changed to "Indian Make by Electrical Process." Even though the wheels may have come off the wagon for The Musical Products Co., Ltd. as far as their recording program was concerned, the company still retained a large amount of stock which had to be cleared to recoup some of the original investment. Hence the company's branches in Madras, Bombay, Calcutta and Colombo

became simply retail outlets to dispose of the Broadcast stockpiles.

While this was going on the Decca Co. had appointed S. H. Haskill (Eastern) Ltd., of Bombay as their representative in India for Brunswick records, which were being manufactured by The Gramophone Co. at Dum Dum.

After less than a dozen issues Jesinglal Mehta abandoned his Diamond Record Co. and his association with the National Gramophone Record Manufacturing Co., Ltd. who had been pressing the Lotus discs for him, and launched The 'Jay Bharat' record Company in October 1938, from the same premises, to promote "his latest flame," Miss Sushila Tembe, a light classical vocalist whom he later married. The recordings for this new label were recorded and manufactured by The Gramophone Co., Ltd. at Dum Dum and although there were less than two dozen releases in all on Jay Bharat, Jesinglal Mehta had finally struck a vein of commercial 'hits.' Most of these were selling strongly



The retail selling of Indian Broadcast records continued through the branches of The Musical Products Ltd., and surprisingly appeared to have achieved greater sales between 1938 and 1940. This upturn in interest in Broadcast was mainly brought about by playing many of the company's records on the Indian Broadcasting Company's radio



stations, located in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. The playing of records over the air had also been a major factor in the promotion of Odeon and Columbia recordings from the mid-1930s and no doubt set the pattern in India for what has become a very common practice for promoting record sales

Of the fate of the 2000-plus matrices of Broadcast recordings, little is known. By 1940 the Madras office had been relocated to a different address in the city and the Bombay office was vacated. The recordings studios there were occupied until 1943, but by 1944 The Musical Products Ltd. had closed all its offices and ceased business.

The Musical Products Ltd – and Jesinglal Mehta in particular, will best be remembered for revitalizing the 'historical' prospects of Indian classical artists, both in concert and on record. Through the enthusiasm and dedication of the company directors (as well as those of other companies of course) the artistry of many Indian classical performers has been preserved on record which might not otherwise have survived at all.

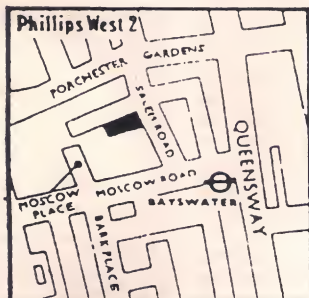
[Acknowledgements to Frank Andrews and to Jim Hayes for assistance with regard to the history of the Broadcast label in Great Britain]

CLPGS to fill Phillips....

We are pleased to confirm that the Society's November London meeting will take place at the sale rooms of Phillips Fine Art Auctioneers, at 10 Salem Road, Bayswater, London W2, on Wednesday 20th November, the evening before their forthcoming Mechanical Music Sale. All the machines to be included in the sale will be on view and members will be able to inspect them privately from 6 – 7 pm. Drinks will also be served.

Following this, Len Watts will present a recital of Pathe centre-start discs, a speciality for which he is justifiably well-known!

Phillips is located, as shown in the map below, just off Queensway and is a short walk from Bayswater Tube station (Circle and District Lines) or Queensway Station (Central Line). There is limited parking in Phillips own yard, as well as street parking nearby in Salem Road itself and in Porchester Gardens (Please note that at present Moscow Road is partially closed for road works). Alternatively, there are two NCP Car Parks on Queensway itself. Please use the side entrance to the building, which will be fully signposted. Our host for the occasion, George Glastris of Phillips, is available on 071-229-9090, should any readers be unsure about any of the details.



Other London Meetings:

September 18th – G. Woolford –
"The Twenty-Five."

December – *Free for all* – members are invited to bring their own records – the evening's theme to be announced.

October – *To be announced.*

Coup. No.	Serial No.	Artiste.	Dialect.	Date Listed.	Date Deleted.
GR 8108 }	OML. 2100 2119 3545	<i>transferred</i> Sushila Tembe ST 5011 " " " "	Hindustani	May '48	30.6.50
8109 }	3546	<i>transferred</i> ST 5012 " "	"	"	"
8110 }	OMH. 8096 8097	<i>transferred</i> ST 5013 " "	"	"	"
8111 }	OMD 4065 4064	<i>transferred</i> ST 4019 Dixit " "	Marekhi	"	"
8112 }	OMH. 8423 8424	<i>transferred</i> ST 4029 Dambe " "	"	"	30.6.61
8113 }	8540 8539	<i>transferred</i> ST 4033 " "	"	"	30.6.50
8114 }	8192 8191	<i>transferred</i> ST 4002 Bhangubai Kerdikar Hindi " "	"	"	"
8115 }	8422 8421	<i>transferred</i> ST 5014 " "	"	"	"
8116 }	OMD 4066 4067	<i>transferred</i> ST 4021 Laxmibai Kelkar " "	Marekhi	"	"
8117 }	OMH 8094 8095	<i>transferred</i> ST 4025 Sushila Kelkar " "	"	"	"
8118 }	OMD. 2470 2472	<i>transferred</i> ST 4013 Gla Naravne " "	"	"	"
8119 }	2363 2358	<i>transferred</i> ST 4010 Shanta Gondhlikar " "	"	"	"
8120 }	CEL. 19927 19928	Sushila Tembe " "	"	June, 1948	30.6.50
8121 }	42189 42190	Abraham Bhagat " "	Hindustani	"	30.6.61
8122 }	21648 21649	Ambadas Indoorkar " "	Instt	"	30.6.50
8123 }	42187 42188	Abraham Bhagat " "	Gujrati	"	31.12.51

Coup. No.	Serial No.	Artiste.	Dialect.	Date Listed.	Date Deleted.
G.E. 8092	CEI. 19929	Sushila Tembe	Kannada	May '48	30.6.62
	19930	"	"	"	"
	42164	Bhagwal-	"	"	30.6.57
8093	42165	"	"	"	"
	27606	Mr. Jarnski	Hindustani	May '48	30.6.57
8094	27607	Shamshad	"	"	"
	27608 ²	"	"	"	"
8095	27609	Mrs. Visnilal	"	"	"
	33001	Shamshad	"	"	"
8096	33002	"	"	"	"
	33003	"	"	"	"
8097	33004	Mrs. Visnilal + Saraj	"	"	"
	OMD. 1976	Sushila Tembe	Marathi	May '48	30.6.50
8098	1977	(Transferred from Jai Bhari)	"	"	"
	2895	Transferred from SJ. 4006	"	"	"
8099	2896	Transferred from SJ. 4009	"	"	"
	OML. 2121	Transferred from SJ. 4009	"	"	30.6.67
8100	2122	Transferred from SJ. 4018	"	"	"
	3547	Transferred from SJ. 4018	"	"	30.6.50
8101	3548	Transferred from SJ. 4021	"	"	"
	3674	Transferred from SJ. 4022	"	"	"
8102	3673	Transferred from SJ. 4022	"	"	"
	OMK. 2352	Transferred from SJ. 4028	"	"	"
8103	2353	Transferred from SJ. 4028	"	"	"
	OMH. 4773	Transferred from SJ. 5001	"	"	"
8104	4774	Transferred from SJ. 5001	Hindustani	"	"
	OMD 3045	Transferred from SJ. 5005	"	"	"
8105	3046	Transferred from SJ. 5005	"	"	"
	OML. 1585	Transferred from SJ. 5006	"	"	"
8106	1586	Transferred from SJ. 5006	"	"	"
	1587	Transferred from SJ. 5008	"	"	"
8107	1588	Transferred from SJ. 5008	"	"	"